

Proper Meat Care



After you have killed an animal, it is your responsibility to salvage all of the meat, in accordance with Alaska State Regulations.

In Alaska, meat is more important than any trophy horn, hide, or antler. Regulations state that the horn, hide, or antlers may be taken out of the field only after the meat is packed out.

Field dressing

Hunters should know how to field dress and care for game meat. Some hunters waste a lot of nutritious, tasty meat because they simply do not know how to properly field dress game. There are several good methods of field dressing. You will be successful with any method as long as you remember these keys to meat care: keep the meat cool, clean and dry.

Always keep the meat cool, clean and dry

Heat is the greatest threat to game meat. To get the meat cool, remove the hide as quickly as possible and get the meat away from internal organs. The warmer the weather, the more urgent this becomes. Meat that spoils the quickest will be around the hip joint in the ham (rear leg). In weather over 60 degrees, it may be necessary to actually place the meat in cool water for 30 to 45 minutes to reduce the heat. A nearby creek, river, or lake will do the job. If this is necessary the meat must be immediately dried after removing it from the water.

Boned out meat is difficult to keep clean and dry

Some hunters “bone” the meat, that is, remove all edible meat from the bones. The reason to “bone” the meat is to reduce the weight to be packed. The problem with “boning” is that chunks of meat placed together in a game bag are harder to keep cool and dry. In some management units in Alaska it is illegal to “bone” the meat because of a history of wasted meat.



After the meat is removed from the animal it should be placed in cotton meat bags. Good meat bags allow air to circulate to the meat but are tough enough to hold heavy loads. The meat bags also help keep the meat clean.

If you have never field dressed a moose or other large-bodied game animal, you should purchase a copy of ADF&G's **“Field Care of Big Game”** instructional video. You can order this video by calling ADF&G in Anchorage at 907-267-2257.



Hanging meat in bags from a meat pole helps keep it clean, cool, and dry.



Game care at camp

Back at camp hang the bagged meat off the ground to help keep the meat clean and cool.

A tarp should be loosely placed over the meat pole to keep rain off the meat bags. All meat should be checked daily. Any loose pieces of meat in the “hamburger” bag should be moved around each day to insure the meat remains cool and dry.

If you don't have access to a meat pole, gather branches and layer them in a grid to keep the meat off the ground. The goal is to provide good air circulation. Loosely cover the pile with a tarp to keep the meat dry.

Spray meat with citric acid to slow bacteria growth

Once all the meat is hung remove the bags and spray the meat with a citric acid/water mixture. The meat should be sprayed until the mixture begins to run off the meat. About two ounces of citric acid for each quart of water will do the job.

Food grade citric acid can be purchased at most pharmacies or feed stores. The citric acid will slow down bacteria growth that spoils meat. It also creates a dark outer “crust” that makes it harder for flies to lay their eggs on the meat. Don't worry about the citric acid mixture getting the meat too wet. The mixture will dry quickly.

River float meat care tips

If you are on a river float hunt it is very difficult to keep the meat dry and cool when it is stacked inside the raft. You must remove the meat from the raft every night before you camp and hang it where it can stay cool.



Audra Brase makes moose burger with her children, Piper and Travis, at their Fairbanks home. Audra is also in the photo at top left, cleaning her moose.